

Mennonite women in business

What image comes to mind when you read the words "business woman" or "female entrepreneur?" Do you think of goal-driven, obsessive, hard-as-nails, aggressive, selfish individuals? If you do, you have probably bought into two stereotypes. The first is of the evil inherent in the world of business. The second is that only power-hungry women would choose to work there.

As you read this edition of *Report*, you will find that the experiences and the questions shared by the contributors show them to be people who are strongly committed to using their abilities in ways that benefit the broader community. They are challenged as they attempt to maintain a healthy balance between work and family. Each writer identifies at least one time in her experience when a choice about career

direction or character had to be made. These are not people who are blindly reaching for the top. They describe considerations involving church, family and quality of life which might be guidelines for anyone making similar decisions.

As I planned this issue of *Women's Concerns Report* I wanted it to communicate well to two groups of readers. Members of the first group are women involved in business themselves. Insights, caveats and encouragement from kindred spirits are needed for these readers. In the second group are readers who have few connections with, and little understanding of, the issues faced by women who have chosen a career in business. I wanted them to hear about business-related issues from the people who experience them.

In this issue you will read about mentors, role models and networks—sources of encouragement and support for business persons. Some of the writers reflect on the ways the church recognized and cultivated their leadership abilities, and how they use those abilities within the church. The questions about balance between personal needs and work, community, family and church responsibilities are faced by all of us at some time or other, and are addressed here from several perspectives.

Finally, you will read of the joys and challenges experienced by women who make their way as professionals in the world of business.

—Compiled by Karen Klassen Harder

Karen Klassen Harder is on the faculty of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., where she teaches in the areas of business and economics. Karen and her husband Jim are members of Shalom Mennonite Church and parents of two young children, Annalisa and John.



by Dee Gaedeert

Doing good

I don't remember ever being given a "goodness hierarchy of professions." No one ever told me that jobs in the medical field are more worthy than jobs in business management, or that being a teacher is more admirable than being in sales. But as I made decisions in my life, that shaped my career path. It is clear now that somehow such a hierarchy was influencing my choices. In fact, I can remember the moment I made this discovery.

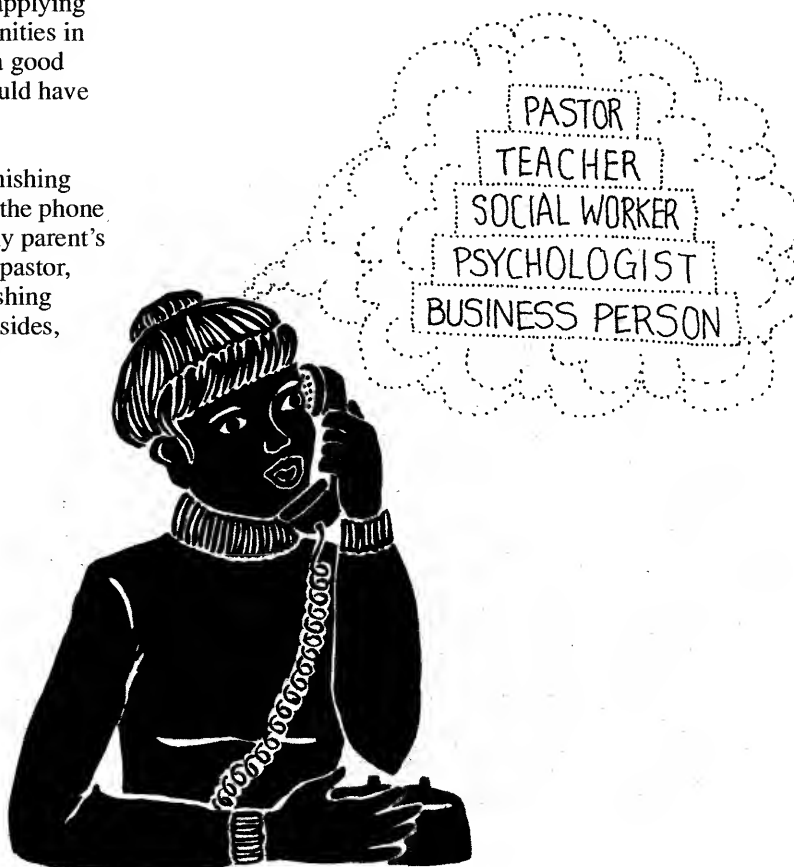
There was a job offer on the table. I had recently finished my graduate work in psychology and was eager to reenter the full-time work force. My original plans shifted during graduate school. Seeking a position in a small college as professor, counselor or administrator was no longer my focus. I was now intrigued with experiences I had applying psychology to business and had looked for opportunities in that area. The job offer required a decision. It was a good offer. There was nothing else on the horizon. It should have been an easy call to make. But I was conflicted.

Sitting at my computer one morning, putting the finishing touches on my dissertation, I reluctantly picked up the phone to call my prospective employer. Instead I dialed my parent's home. It was a silly move. My father, a Mennonite pastor, and my mother, an employee of a Mennonite publishing house, would both be at their respective offices. Besides, I was 31 years old. This was my decision to make.

To this day I wonder about the forces at work that caused my dad to answer the phone. He was on his way to an appointment and had made a quick stop at home. I talked with him about my job offer. I remember sounding a little apologetic as I described the (for profit) company, the nature of their (non-social service) work and my

proposed job responsibilities (neither teacher nor counselor). And I remember my complete surprise at my dad's enthusiastic response. It was that response that released me to accept the offer. I had needed permission. From my family. From my heritage.

The relief I felt after that brief conversation was an insight for me. I was not entirely aware of my built-in "goodness hierarchy of professions." I clearly valued the helping professions. And I evidently saw the business environment as not measuring up—perhaps even tainted. How could working in a business environment possibly be an option with its bottom-line focus, decisions made only on the profit motive and employees seemingly expendable. My stereotypes were exposed. My tolerance was narrower than I had guessed. Whereas I had assumed it would be Mennonite friends and family who would see my choice as "not good," it was actually my own barrier I needed to face. Indeed, it was their permission I needed to move ahead.



"I clearly valued the helping professions. And I evidently saw the business environment as not measuring up—perhaps even tainted."

I took the job. It was a wonderful experience for me. It led to an entrepreneurial opportunity four years later. And so it was that in early 1990 I became co-founder and principal in a new business venture that now employs 40 people and is dedicated to helping organizations manage their customer and employee relationships more effectively.

How has my perspective changed? I now see what I do in my work to have tremendous opportunity for good. These are the opportunities that I did not anticipate I would find in a business environment:

1. *Helping others be successful.* Through our products and services we help other organizations enhance their effectiveness, by listening to their customers, involving their employees in improving the work they do and ultimately achieving their objectives. Our customers energize us with their accounts about how our processes have helped them remove barriers, resolve conflicts, make significant improvements and realize tangible results. We also hear from our employees who are now clear, some for the first time, about how their work impacts the larger vision of their company.

2. *Creating jobs.* People need work. They need opportunities to work in environments that are clean, safe, humane, well-paying and allow an opportunity to use their skills. We have created such jobs—40 of them to date with growth rates of 25–40 percent projected for the next five years. If we manage our business well and continue to be profitable, we will be able to support individuals and their families through our success.

3. *Developing talent.* An organization like ours is only as good as its people. The most rewarding experiences for me have been in building a team of people that, in turn, creates an effective work environment. A strong work ethic, creative and innovative thinking, unwavering focus on the needs of our customers and a commitment to work together to increase effectiveness all describe the environment we strive for.

4. *Confronting ethical dilemmas openly.* In our business, as in any business, we are called upon to make important judgments on issues that present moral and ethical dilemmas. How do we establish and reinforce the values upon which we want to market our most important decisions? I have come to

realize that there is no substitute for carefully selecting the right people to be part of our organization. And, ultimately, I carry the responsibility for communicating clearly and consistently through my behavior those organizational values that define us. The discussions about ethical dilemmas are no longer academic, but require quick decisions and have important consequences. My choices since the phone call eight years ago have been gratifying. The opportunity to start a new business and develop innovative processes and products, while building an organization to support them, has been stimulating. It has also reshaped and broadened my definition of "doing good."

Dee Gaeddert is president of Quality Institute International, Inc., in St. Paul, Minn. She previously served as director of survey research with National Information Systems, where she worked with organizations to design and implement measurement systems to gather information for customers, employees and suppliers. Her area of expertise is individual and organizational assessment. Dr. Gaeddert has written extensively and co-authored *Quality on Trial*, with Roger and Maynard Howe. She grew up in Henderson, Neb., and Goessel, Kan., and spent three years with her family on an MCC assignment in Zaire. She received her bachelor's degree from Bethel College in 1977. She holds a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Minnesota and currently is on their faculty as clinical assistant professor of psychology.

"I have learned that networking is hard work. It takes time. It takes practice. It takes you places you never dreamed of. You meet people who take you seriously. It is not a necessary evil. It provides opportunities to serve others. It is a necessary joy."

by Herta Janzen

Connecting with people to get my job done

While pondering the pros and cons of applying for the position of executive director, one of the big barriers I encountered was the potential demand for networking activity. Networking seemed like an overwhelming and foreboding task. Being the executive director of a church-owned and operated health-care/seniors facility funded by three government sources, would mean connecting with people from four distinct groups, each having its own set of policies, procedures and expectations. The more I thought about it, the more encompassing the networking demands became. In order to muster the courage and confidence to apply for the position I simplified the networking task to mean "connecting with people to get my job done."

I realized networking would not be my favorite part of the job because I do not find it easy to connect with new people quickly and comfortably. But I rationalized. Fund-raising, for example, was a scary task, but in the 20-year life of this institution there had been little need for this and so I felt safe. Then too, every job has some tasks that are more challenging than others and networking would fall under the "challenging, to be developed" category. Hopefully, I would only have to connect with people I already knew. I anticipated that my need to network would grow gradually and therefore I would be able to learn slowly and carefully. I also had the organization's board to lean on.

I applied for the position and was appointed. Now the networking task was no longer a theory. It became a practical reality. Within the first six months, two significant events occurred—an almost complete turnover in board membership and the need for a major fund-raising drive. I learned very quickly—about networking.

What have I learned? Networking is a necessary part of a manager's job. You cannot function or lead without it. As executive director my primary responsibility is to provide leadership for the organization in a manner that is consistent with its mission. I do not possess all the knowledge or skills needed to accomplish that task. I need the resources of others and one resource is networking. That task involves taking

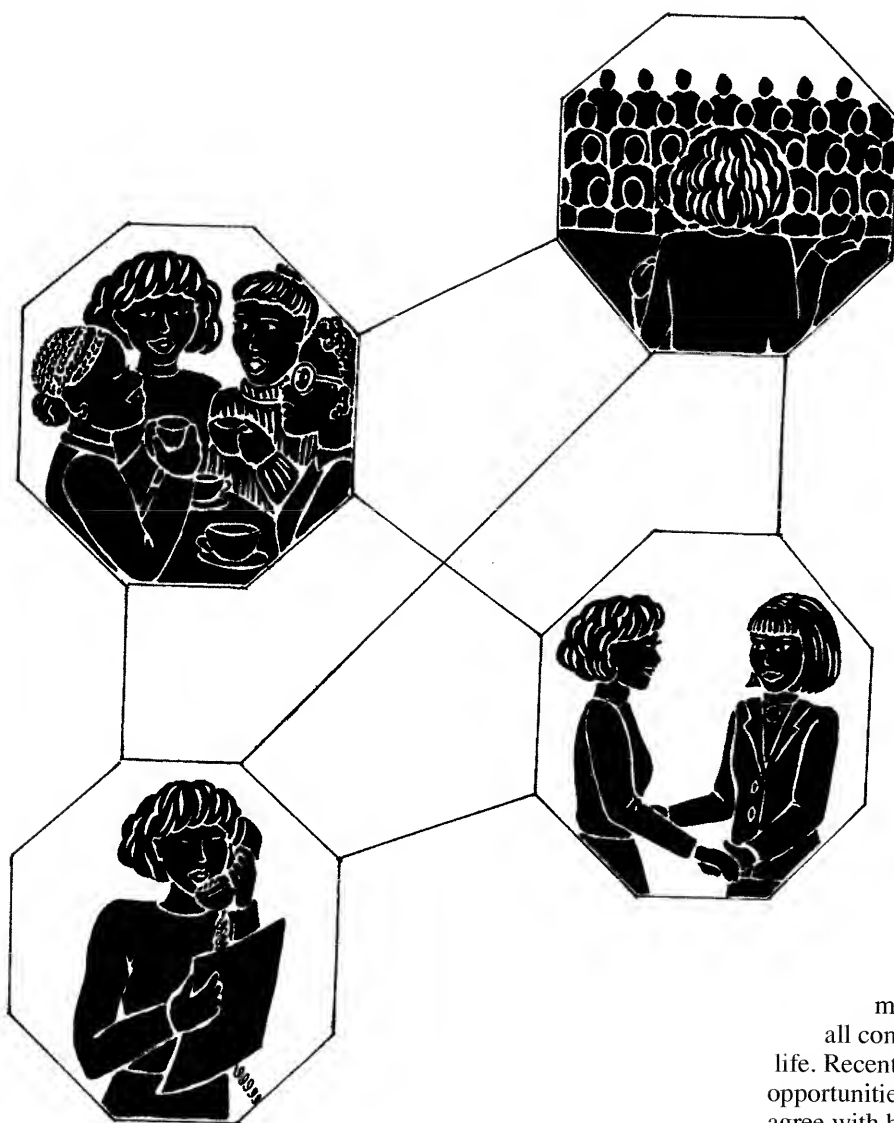
time, when time is scarce, and deliberately planning to do it. It also implies being a link in the network for someone else!

Often the biggest block to tackling something new is fear. My fear was that I would not be taken seriously, or that I would not have all the answers, or that I would ask stupid questions. I decided to look again at my definition of networking. A network involves connection. A network can be large and its strands can go far beyond our personal boundaries. To be part of a network you have to start somewhere. I started with the familiar and the local.

The previous executive director had introduced me to a breakfast group of health-care executive directors who meet once a month to share information and discuss problems—a network! The meetings are informal. We take turns hosting the breakfast at our facilities. As each person arrives she/he writes an agenda item on a flip chart. The host then chairs the meeting by going through the agenda and having each person who put something on the flip chart comment on it. The meeting is one and a half to two hours. I find this to be a very useful forum. The most comforting thing about this meeting is that there are no stupid questions. We all share from our experience and have a lot of empathy for each other's situation. One third of the group is women.

Working for a facility that receives most of its funding from the government, I learned very quickly to work with government officials in various departments. I also realized that there are policies and procedures that guide all decision-making within those departments. On one occasion I felt that the issue at hand was beyond the jurisdiction of the government officials that I was expected to relate to, so I wrote a letter directly to the Minister of Housing with copies to two other ministers. I thought of myself as one small voice with little power but felt that, no matter how small the impact, I had to write this letter. A week later an official from the office of the Minister of Housing called to say that all three ministers would like to visit our facility to hear a presentation of the issue about which I had written.

They had taken my letter seriously! I had not given the letter a second thought nor informed my board of the action I had taken. I had not even considered what kind of presentation I



"I simplified the networking task to mean 'connecting with people to get my job done.'"

gender concerns. I felt uncomfortable with this approach because I had at the outset determined that if I failed at any task in this position it would be because I had not equipped myself to do the job well, or was unable to apply my learning appropriately, and not because I was a woman or was being "mistreated" as a woman.

I have a great appreciation and admiration for women who have worked for the equality of women in the workplace, in the church and in the family. However, at this stage in my personal development I do not have the skills to grapple with gender issues other than by daily practice in my work. I, therefore, made a deliberate decision to choose mentors who were experienced peers and for whom the gender issue, although relevant, was not a "them versus us" issue. I now have both male and female mentors. We call each other, we have breakfast or lunch together, we share information and we learn from each other.

Using the definition "connecting with people to get my job done" allows me to focus beyond my immediate workplace. The workplace can be all consuming, but it is, after all, only one segment of life. Recently an acquaintance was bemoaning the lack of opportunities for women in the church. Although I could agree with her on some issues, I felt that attitudes had changed over the last decade and tried to encourage her by listing some of the opportunities I have had—worship leader, panel participant, adult Sunday School leader, conference board member (provincial, Canadian, North American), Mennonite World Conference planning committee and college board.

I was a bit taken aback by her reply, "But you have power!" I am not a powerful person. Yes, I do have power (authority) at work as does everyone else. It is, however, power that has been delegated or entrusted to me. Our position or job description does give us power. Through my work, I meet people (another kind of network) who, among things that they do, recruit people for tasks in the church or to serve on boards. I have always chosen to assume that I have been asked to serve because of the skills that I have. I know that in some situations I was selected because an effort at achieving gender balance was being made. Nevertheless, I was also

would make if, by some slim chance, the Minister would see and respond to my letter. The board executive, key staff members and I met with the ministers over lunch. We were given one hour in which to have our meal and make our presentation. Again, I was taken seriously and received encouragement to develop our programs. An added bonus was the potential for some extra funding. I have learned that making connections does not mean that one necessarily gets what one asks for. As one keeps prodding, the network is extended and the potential for working productively at issues related to the mission of the organization are extended as well.

When I accepted this position, one of my priorities was to find some mentors. Networking provides that opportunity. Initially, the most experienced mentors that come to mind were all males. In my previous positions in health-care I had contact with some female peers. Though they were good administrators they approached many management issues as

"If a church activity coincides with a time when her business is operating, she plans her time to satisfy both commitments or leaves someone else in charge of the business, if necessary."

selected because of the skills I developed in the workplace that became known by way of networking connections. The workplace has also benefitted from my experience in church settings.

Another network focus outside the workplace is my family. I have connections through my children and my spouse. Some of the best networking has occurred when I have spent a week-end at a conference as "Mrs. Neil Janzen." I have met people who had similar interests with whom I could share ideas and through whom I made other helpful contacts.

I have learned that networking is hard work. It takes time. It takes practice. It takes you places you never dreamed of. You meet people who take you seriously. It is not a necessary evil. It provides opportunities to serve others. It is a necessary joy.

Herta Janzen is the executive director of Donwood Manor, a residential facility for older adults in Winnipeg, Man. She is a registered nurse and holds a degree in management from the University of Western Ontario. Herta and her husband Neil have held service assignments with Mennonite Central Committee in Zambia (1965-1968) and India (1972-1977). They have two adult children.


by Joaida Castillo Barquero

The woman in small business

Compiler's note: Joaida Castillo Barquero wrote this article in response to questions I asked her about the experience of female entrepreneurs in Nicaragua. I asked about community and support systems, role models and mentors, and balance between family, church and business. She responded by describing the experience of a member of the CHISPA program, a credit program sponsored by Mennonite Economics Development Associates (MEDA), which provides capital and small business development training to entrepreneurs. Ron Flickinger, then with MCC in Nicaragua, translated her account.

Mrs. Sandra Montenegro is 38 years old, lives in the Camilo Ortega neighborhood of the city of Masaya in Nicaragua and is the owner of a shoe business. She has been a partner in the CHISPA program since 1992. Her first loan was given through the "solidarity group" program. Then, as her business grew, she took out loans through the individual businessperson program. She became involved in the work by necessity, since her husband knew shoemaking and they needed a way to provide income for their family.

She is a member of the Catholic Church, in the "Neocatecumena path" movement, and participates as part of the evangelization team in the Magdalena parish and in other parishes when there are evangelization campaigns.

Her active participation in the church for 18 years has helped her acquire a deeper faith in God and has blessed her work and her business. Even with her active involvement in church activities, her shoe production has not been affected. Her connection with the church has permitted her to prosper, since her faith helps her be more austere and to be able to work hard.

In some ways the business takes some time away from the family and particularly from the care of the children—she has made the choice to dedicate the majority of her time to the workshop since it is the only source of income for the family. For Sandra, there isn't any tension in the family-



"The church has recognized her charisma and has elected her as a member of a team that does evangelization and provides support to a number of communities. The church has helped her and other members with their education, so that they could be good students and good workers."

business-church relationship. Everything is planned so that the family, the business and the church are all in communion with God. This management of her time has helped her to be more responsible and carry out her work in an appropriate amount of time.

The church encourages its members to have honorable work. Since she has not failed in her responsibility to the business or to the work of evangelization, church members are pleased with the contribution she makes.

The beginning of her business came more than seven years ago when an advisor, who was a member of her church, encouraged her to produce a good quality shoe and helped her to achieve this objective. Now her workshop is more developed. It is very important for her to have an advisor because, in moments of crisis and depression, the advisor has restored her spirit and helped her to continue her faith in God in order to continue to work for a better life.

Señora Montenegro has also acted as an advisor and example for other people in her community, helping them to begin prosperous businesses of their own. She has done this with other members of her church and members of other churches, because her faith in God and having honorable work has helped her to be more responsible.

The church has helped her to choose what is most necessary in life. This has helped in the balance between family and business, since the business is what provides for the family's necessities and is the only source of income. She divides the income from the business to provide for the development of the business as well as for the family's needs.

This ability to plan her time was acquired through the advice of her community and the assistance of the CHISPA program. On Sundays she visits her community and others in order to participate in religious activities. The church meetings are at night and retreats don't follow a regular

schedule. If a church activity coincides with a time when her business is operating, she plans her time to satisfy both commitments or leaves someone else in charge of the business, if necessary.

The church has recognized her charisma and has elected her as a member of a team that does evangelization and provides support to a number of communities. The church has helped her and other members with their education, so that they could be good students and good workers.

She has had joys and challenges. The biggest joy has been the growth of her family and, along with better family planning, her good health. Another joy has been having a solid, well-developed business since the work is fundamental for the family.

Her suggestion for other women is to place God first and to maintain hope. If they have problems, they should resolve them with the help of God. With respect to small business development, she suggests that women look for new markets with a good clientele, don't sell products at elevated prices, and make products of good quality. What should not be done is to spend the money badly and to fail to plan expenses. Even if there are difficult times with the business, capital should not be spent.

Her best experience has been to have her own business, to receive credit from CHISPA in order to increase her capital and to work with her own capital. A bad experience has been that customers have not kept up their payments for her products, but this experience has helped her to look for more honest, responsible customers.

Before she entered the CHISPA program, her business had eight employees. Now there are 14 who produce 200 women's shoes weekly. Sandra believes that her business will continue to develop with the help of God and the CHISPA program.

Joaida Castillo Barquero is mother of two girls, 5 and 8. She is director of MEDA's CHISPA Micro-Enterprise Credit Program in Nicaragua. She graduated in economics from Nicaragua University and got a post-graduate degree in finance from INCAE (Harvard affiliate). Before entering MEDA/CHIPAS, she had extensive experience in the area of bank credit.

"Life is too short for anyone to spend a solid block of 40 consecutive years in grinding, competitive work, living from one weekend to another. On the other hand, life is too long for anyone to spend the last 30 years in debilitating, meaningless play."

by Marie Snider

Building a life, not a career

Long before Ken Dychtwald wrote *Age Wave* and Richard Bolles wrote *The Three Boxes of Life*, I instinctively followed the advice they would give decades later.

According to Dychtwald and Bolles, life is made up of three building blocks—education, work and leisure. Traditionally, we have used each of the three blocks only once.

For the first block of life, we are educated. First by our parents, then by the public schools and finally in institutions of higher education. Then somewhere between the ages of 20 and 30 we consider ourselves ready to move into the world of work—the grinding, unremitting, competitive world of work. This block goes on and on, usually for 35 or 40 years. And then one day around age 60 or 65, society tells us to take up leisure. For the rest of our lives. And we listen.

When you put it on paper like that, it sounds like a very foolish plan, and both Dychtwald and Bolles say it is outdated. What we must learn to do, particularly now that we live so long, is use each block many times.

Of course we'll always start with education, but after that the blocks can come in any order. Work, education, leisure, work, leisure, work, education, work and so on. And with such flexibility, we could be in any block at the end of life.

Long before age 60, I inadvertently discovered this creative way of using the three blocks of life. Upon graduating from high school, I was deemed too young to go directly to college. That meant a year off. Oh, I helped my mother around the house and yard some, but most of the time was spent in libraries and enjoying nature. It was one of the most fun periods of my life.

Then followed two years of junior college, a stint of rural school teaching, two more years of college, four years of high school teaching, a year

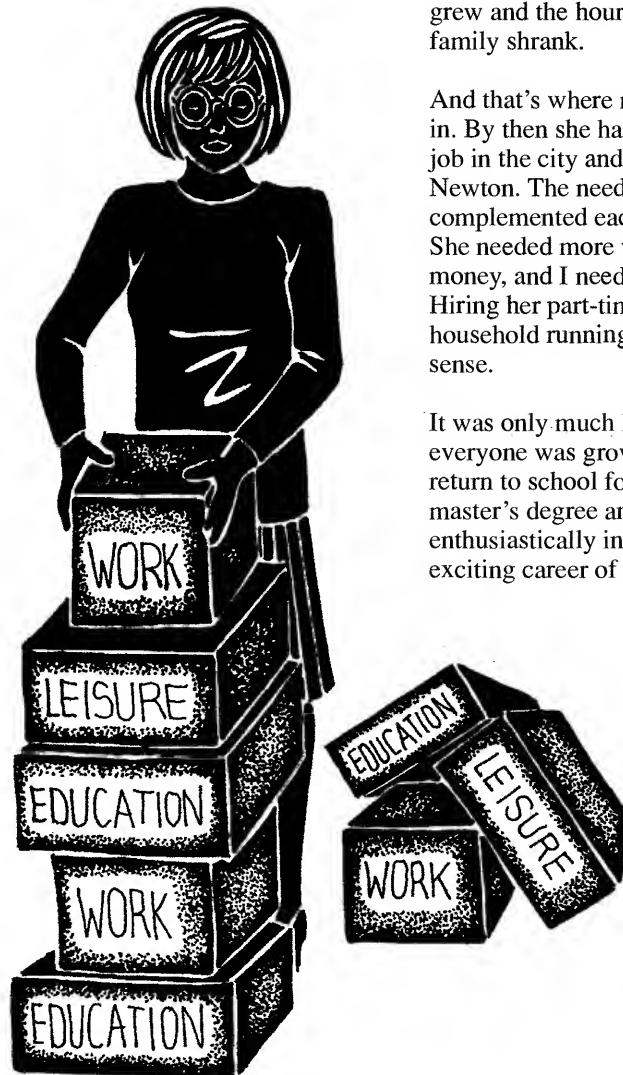
of seminary, a year of free-lance and curriculum writing at my own pace, two years in public relations work and then returning to finish seminary.

By then I was past 30 and ready to have a family. For the next 10 years, I honed my writing skills, raised two children and taught occasional night classes. Most of the time our budget was tight, but I always said, "I'll make money later—plenty of it—but I can't do this later. My children will be gone."

Time passed and the children grew as I had known they would. When the last one went to kindergarten, I again took a public relations job. At first the job was part time, but over the years the job responsibilities grew and the hours for home and family shrank.

And that's where my mother stepped in. By then she had retired from her job in the city and moved to North Newton. The needs in our lives complemented each other exactly. She needed more work and more money, and I needed more leisure. Hiring her part-time to help keep the household running made perfect sense.

It was only much later when everyone was grown that I would return to school for a second master's degree and then plunge enthusiastically into the most exciting career of my life. As a



"After all, it's a life you are building, not just a career. So don't be afraid to experiment with the three blocks of life."

health care communications executive, my days were filled with corporate meetings, deadlines and staff supervision. But the years passed, and it was eventually time to move on. I was 63 years old, and although I vigorously opposed the concept of retirement, still the time was right for me.

Finally, I would make my lifetime dream come true. Already as a young woman of 20, I had known with certainty that some day I wanted to spend full time writing in a wooded setting in New England. Now at last it would happen, but with one difference. The wooded plot of ground had been planted by my husband in a small college town in the state I had grown to love—Kansas.

Looking back, it has been a near perfect life as the three building blocks of education, work and leisure have shaped and reshaped themselves over the years.

Richard Bolles and Ken Dychtwald definitely know what they're talking about when they advise using the three blocks of life creatively. Life is too short for anyone to spend a solid block of 40 consecutive years in grinding, competitive work, living from one weekend to another.

On the other hand, life is too long for anyone to spend the last 30 years in debilitating, meaningless play. Every generation has a right to meaningful work. And the times of our lives must each be lived to the hilt. Our parents will be gone and our children will be grown. All that will matter is that we have done the right things. For example, it may not be so important to build bank accounts when you have small children. You can turn your energy to making money later.

After all, it's a life you are building, not just a career. So don't be afraid to experiment with the three blocks of life. Take a year off when your children are young. Go back to school when you run out of steam.

Work. Leisure. Education. You can juggle the building blocks in any order you like to create the life you want. Just always make sure you're growing and one day the dream will happen.

Marie Snider writes a nationally syndicated newspaper column—*This Side of 60*. Snider, who holds an M.R.E. degree from Goshen Biblical Seminary (1957) and an M.S. in journalism and mass communication from Kansas State University (1980), previously had an award-winning career in mental health communications. She and her husband Howard Snider attend the Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan.


by Katherine G. Grusy

Mentors, networking and balancing work and family

Why do some women struggle in the business world? What does it take for a woman to have a successful career? For a female to be successful in business, she must work at developing three areas: mentors, balance between family and work, and networking.

Mentors can play a key role in helping a businessperson become successful. A mentor can provide knowledge and experience to a person new to the business world. When choosing a mentor, it is important to choose one who is willing to share his/her knowledge. Youth are often assigned a mentor so that someone, other than their parents, is available to guide, support and counsel them. Ask a successful businessperson if they had or still have a mentor and you will find most do.

Several individuals have been instrumental in helping shape my career. Of course, parents play an important role in shaping their children, so let's discuss the attributes of another person who has been an invaluable teacher and resource, a mentor. During my career, this person has never been thought of as a mentor, but considered to be a great teacher and friend. He has taught me about the financial world from scratch. Although finances has always been an interest of mine, the vast knowledge learned about securities, insurance and financial planning would have never been acquired without my mentor, Roger Nafziger.

Although Roger was raised in the Mennonite Church, the church was not the reason for our introduction. Roger happened to be self-employed, representing a large, national financial planning company for whom I had recently begun to work. The district manager, Roger Nafziger, was assigned as my trainer. He served as my mentor for several years before he was called to share his financial expertise with the church. He felt that this change would allow him to better balance his time between family and work. Two years later, Roger offered me an opportunity to serve as a financial planner for Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA), again with him as my mentor.

"We must keep life in perspective and make sure we are doing the things we enjoy."

Like Roger Nafziger, mentors and those who interview prospective employees must be open-minded and view men and women as equals in the work place. A good mentor is able to identify a person who is motivated and willing to learn and take responsibility for their job. There was a time when a man was hired based on his potential, while the decision to hire a woman for the same position would be based on her accomplishments. There seems to be a trend away from this approach.

While education can be very important in securing certain positions, credentials alone do not qualify an individual for a job. For example, there are many people who are trained as financial planners, but only some of them are good at what they do. These people are motivated and excited about their work. You must strive to continue to learn in order to have a successful career.

Learning from and working with Roger has truly been a growing time for my career. Also, working for a church agency has been a wonderful experience spiritually, for my career, and especially in helping balance my time between family and work.

There is not a magical method of balancing your time between family and work. What needs to be present is the proper mind set and total flexibility. Yes, there will be an evening when you need to work, your spouse has a ball game, and no one remembered to obtain child care—or when you need to be out-of-town on business and your spouse forgot totally that you were going to be gone. Yet, through all of the chaos, things eventually work, as long as everyone remains flexible.

My husband, Jim, is my most valuable asset in helping me to balance my time. He's a dream husband—flexible, understanding and kind. He encourages me to pursue my goals even if it means that he may have to make some sacrifices. This was especially the case when I was self-employed and worked long hours as well as evenings and weekends. Now, my occupation requires some overnight travel. Without Jim's full support of my work, my career would not continue to grow or be satisfying.



Many people, men and women, still believe that a woman's place is in the home. Yes, family should be the number one priority. However, this should not restrict a woman from having a career, if she so chooses. However, when a mother chooses to work outside the home, she will encounter a whole new set of challenges. First, with a two-income family, there are three jobs and only two people to do them. This means once husband and wife are home from work, they must share the responsibilities at home. As my husband put it, "Men with wives who also work outside the home, can no longer simply mow the yard and wash the car on weekends, nor can they come home from work, sit on their duff and watch television. They must be willing to help cook,

"However, as long as everyone remains flexible and communicates effectively, women and men will compliment each other in the work place."

clean and handle the children." This can be a tremendously difficult, if not impossible, adjustment to make in order to have a two-income household.

Another issue working mothers face is the barrage of questions people ask regarding the woman's children. You can expect questions like these: "What do you do with your children while you are at work?" "How can you leave your children with a child care provider?" "Don't you worry about them?" These inquiries come from well-meaning people, but can hurt your feelings and insult your intelligence. Your family must remain a priority and your children and spouse should be able to sense that they are important. Also, there must be a lot of love and spiritual growth in your household.

Our children have grown into wonderful little people despite the fact that they have a mother and father who work outside our home full-time. Our children are very loving and giving. They have good manners and respect others. Our children love their child care provider and look forward to going to her house. Child care has provided a good social outlet for our children, which has helped them mature.

Time management is another invaluable asset. Everything is scheduled in one of my two calendars. One calendar is my daytime calendar. This is where I record appointments, meetings and any activities that will occur from dawn to around five p.m. The second calendar used is a social life calendar. On this calendar, all of the family activities are recorded. This includes activities that we do as a family as well as everyone's individual commitments. Needless to say, a lost date book is a tragedy in our home.

Occasionally, all of us have individual appointments at the same time, and, they can't all be kept. Or, we compromise and work out a way to meet all of our commitments. Because we choose to be very active and involved, we realize that we can't do everything, and, as long as my family and I choose to be active at work and socially, our house will not be spotless nor will the dishes always get done after a meal. A working mother needs to come to grips with this fact. We must keep life in perspective and make sure we are doing the things we enjoy.

Sometimes this balancing act occurs because Jim or I have educational or professional meetings to attend. We find these sessions to be invaluable for several reasons. First, these

professional organizations provide a social outlet where we can build new friendships. Also, these meetings provide a means to further our professional knowledge, which is critical. Further education stimulates your thought processes and helps keep you current in your field of expertise. Also, networking with other professionals offers valuable business resources. Lastly, becoming acquainted with other business people can provide you with new job opportunities, which may serve to further your success as a professional business person.

Historically, the business world was an atypical place for a woman. Tensions can surface between men and women in the work place because of gender differences, and the fear of a sexual harassment charge has made men and women more distant in the work place. However, as long as everyone remains flexible and communicates effectively, women and men will compliment each other in the work place. To be a professional businessperson is extremely tough for any gender, but to be a professional businesswoman and a mother may be almost impossible; however, it can be accomplished if the proper recipe is followed.

Kathy Grusy lives in Goshen, Ind., where she is employed by Mennonite Foundation. Her previous employment was in the areas of mortgage banking and financial planning. She and her husband Jim are members of Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen and have three children, two daughters, ages 6 and 4, and an infant son.

"We worked hard to build the business. The business was next door to our home, so it was like living on a family farm. Business was like 'cows to be milked.'"

by Rhoda Oberholtzer

A family business

My interest in flower arranging was developed and affirmed by my dad. When my sister and I placed flowers on the supper table he offered words of encouragement. I had six sisters and five brothers. What place had flowers at a supper table of 12 children? Yet my father complemented my flower arranging. He would say, "A few flowers arranged well are better than many flowers in a vase." My dad died of cancer at the age of 47, one year after my marriage to my husband Jay. But his gift to me was the positive feedback about my gifts, offered as I grew up.

My parents taught me about business as I was growing up. I learned about sales, merchandising, management and customer service in the family business. In our home we were taught coping skills and how to handle multiple chores, while at the same time enjoying our work and having fun with our responsibilities.

I began my work in floral designs by teaching and presenting programs in our family business classroom. I found those activities satisfying, and grew more confident of my abilities after winning National Awards in flower shows.

After serving two years of I-W service in Cleveland, Ohio, my husband, Jay, and I formed a partnership with my brother and purchased the family business from my mother, with the understanding that all my brothers and sisters were welcome to join it when they reached the age of 21.

We worked hard to build the business. The business was next door to our home, so it was like living on a family farm. Business was like "cows to be milked." It was something that continually needed attention. Everyone helped with the daily chores at the market and the business area become the training ground for our children.

To juggle the responsibilities of three sons and the family business was at times overwhelming. Fortunately, I had a

high energy level and was a focused, goal-oriented person. I made a list of the jobs and activities that I was doing and decided which of them I wanted to keep. I eliminated a few and hired other persons to do some of the tasks, which freed me to pursue the work that I chose to continue. I planned ways to do every domestic task faster and easier. Examining ways to be most productive, I scheduled everything very tightly, using synergism to overlap the jobs which needed completing. A positive attitude was essential to our family's well-being.

I participated in PTA and associated school activities but, regretfully, we were not involved in school sports. I did not teach or work in the business in the summer or on Saturdays when the children were home. Every summer I planned a learning experience with the boys and visited local businesses with them. My husband Jay took each son on a separate motorcycle trip.

During those hectic years of raising three sons, teaching and presenting programs, my husband and I reserved Friday



evening for the two of us— often tennis and dinner out. We knew we could cope with our busy schedules as long as we knew “here comes Friday.”

The “Jesus” meetings at Morgantown, Pa., in the early 1970s were a definite turning point for our family. We became active in the ministry to youth. My struggles with parenting resolved themselves. Peace came to our house as we matured spiritually together. I believe a parent’s open, honest and transparent attitude before God and with the children is essential for growth. Not forcing but creating an openness seemed to work best for us.

When I was 30 years old, I studied people in their 40s and 50s and 60s to see what issues we might face when we reached those life stages. I tried to learn from the examples I saw, and hoped to avoid some obvious pitfalls. From others around me I learned to question building a bigger and better house when the children are gone. I learned that we would be less burdened if we collected fewer “things” and learned that for us it made sense not to do anything we could pay someone else to do, at least some of the time. In these ways we could be free to pursue the activities that were important to us.

When the children were older, I took a year off from entertaining and going places, so I could fully concentrate on growing spiritually. God met me in realistic, specific and profound ways. After a process of learning to commit my ways to Jesus for cleansing and for direction, he did a new thing in my life. God asked me to give him my design ability to the extent he could take it from me. I was very reluctant at first, but God met me when I said, “Yes, it is yours, I’m on the alter of sacrifice.” God then took my ability and gave me insights and an understanding of the scriptures in terms of flower arranging principles. A new parable was birthed.

One time while I was doing a flower demonstration for a group, I felt God asking me to share some of the spiritual insights given to me. When I obeyed, God blessed others also. The more I obeyed, the more God blessed me. God opened up a ministry more than I could imagine. He turned my flower arranging demonstrations into a ministry through the medium of flower designs, allowing me to show the scriptures in a parable so that people could see as well as hear the word of God. The doors were open to speak to all denominations of Protestants and Catholics from Florida to Ontario.

I found our Mennonite church a safe place to grow. My leadership gifts were developed while I served on church and business boards and committees. These involvements brought fulfillment to me and opened up opportunities and

expanded my knowledge. My service on the Eastern Mennonite Mission Board and as a director on a bank board helped balance my perspective. I experienced subtle differences between church boards and the bank board and learned from each one. When I served on our church board, we nodded our heads as a way of showing the chair how we felt about a particular issue. At bank board meetings I found that I was the only female member and also the only one who nodded in response to issues. I soon learned to voice my opinion or show it in a vote.

The Mennonite Business and Professional Women of Lancaster was started after a few of us talked about our jobs and how we relate to the church as Christians in the workplace. Another organization, Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), has been the largest single satisfaction to me. Meeting other persons in business in Canada and the United States is an encouragement to me to be faithful to God in the workplace. MEDA helps women as well as men by participating in business enterprises in developing countries and in North America. Business persons have an opportunity to share salvation’s good news with customers and co-workers. Through my work with MEDA, I see my business and the business of other Christians as mission. We have a contribution to make.

I realize that in my current stage of life I have a great opportunity to share my faith and experience with others beginning their careers. Things are changing and hopefully fewer women will be faced with some of the kinds of questions asked of me. For example, at a board meeting where I was the only woman one of the other members asked, “Are we having food?—there is a woman here.” On another occasion I was asked whether I was at the meeting to take the place of my husband. I replied, “I’m here to take my place.”

There are wonderful ways for women to use their gifts. Today women have even more space to explore their gifts than we had in earlier years. I praise God for His grace and mercy.

Rhoda Oberholtzer recently retired after 43 years with Stauffers of Kissel Hill, a family-owned retail enterprise in Lancaster County, Pa. She and her husband Jay have three sons and two grandchildren. They are members of Lititz (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Women in ministry

- **Edna Dyck** has been serving as pastoral assistant at Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.
- **Rosella Epp** began October 1 as co-pastor with Calvin Yoder at Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.
- **Iris Hartshorn** was ordained in September at Houston (Tex.) Mennonite Church. She serves as chaplain in the area hospice.

Books of interest on this topic

Aburdene, Patricia and John Naisbitt. *Megatrends for Women*. New York: Villard Books, 1992.

Barrentine, Pat. *When the Canary Stops Singing*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler, 1993.

Breton, Denise and Christopher Largent. *The Soul of Economies: Spiritual Evolution Goes to the Marketplace*. Wilmington, Del.: Idea House Publishing Company, 1991.

Fassel, Diane. *Working Ourselves to Death*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.

Renesch, John, Ed. *New Traditions in Business: Spirit and Leadership in the 21st Century*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1992.

Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Letters

The following sonnet was written in a creative writing class and is shared by its writer with Report readers.

Sisters' Song

O sisters, may we celebrate our lives
With songs of hope and through creative minds
Give birth to rhythm - lyrics that derive
Their meaning deep within all womankind.
Some songs are filled with pain that women share
To bring the songs of life for all to hear
And nurture human spirits everywhere
The same, familiar tune throughout the years.
For those before us, still, their songs resound
Inspiring those remaining to rejoice
And draw their strength from beauty that is found
In hearts of women joined in blended voice.

The song continues, sister, sing along!

For many voices joined will make us strong.

—Susan Leaman Williams, Kirkland, Wash.

- **Doris Weber** is interim pastor at Mannheim Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont.
- **Dorothy Kratz** was ordained October 2 at North Suburban Mennonite Church in Mundelein, Ill.
- **Gloria Jost** was licensed and installed as pastor of Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church in Canby, Ore., on October 2. Her husband Garry is also a pastor at Pacific Covenant.
- **Jane H. Peifer** was ordained November 20 at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

News and verbs

- **Stories are needed for a history of Russian Mennonite women's experience** in war, famine and immigration, 1914-1930. Gloria Neufeld Redekop is beginning a history project, and is looking for diaries, letters, stories and biographies that reflect the experience of Russian Mennonite women during World War I, Bolshevik Revolution, civil war, famine and subsequent immigration to Canada. If you have materials or know of someone who could be interviewed, contact Gloria at: 5 Beddoe Lane, Gloucester, ON, K1B 3X9; phone/fax 613-837-4218; e-mail az651@freenet.carleton.ca.

- Catherine R. Mumaw, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Services, was awarded the 1994 **Distinguished Faculty Award by the Oregon State University Home Economics Alumni Association** in October. Special mention was made of her promotion of global perspectives at the university. She is a member of the Board of Directors for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) and chairs the Economic Development Committee of the board.
- Carol Gingerich is new **assistant professor of piano and music theory** at Tabor (Kan.) College.
- An exhibit of the **lives of three local Mennonite women** was on display at The MeetingHouse, a Mennonite museum in Harleysville, Pa., in fall 1994. The three women featured were Hannah Rittenhouse Clemens, 1880-1977, homemaker and pastor's wife; Annie Funk, (cont. on p. 16)

Is it time to renew? Please CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL.

If your mailing label on the back page says "Nov-Dec 1994" or "Jan-Feb 1995," this is your last issue. Please renew your subscription **by Feb. 17** in order to continue receiving *Women's Concerns Report* without missing an issue. Make any corrections on the mailing label and return it with this form. Thank you!

Attach mailing label or write name and address here:

Name _____

Address _____

Please sign me up for *Report* for:

- _____ 1 year at \$12 US/\$15 Cdn, enclosed
- _____ 2 years at \$20 US/\$25 Cdn, enclosed
- _____ I am a voluntary service worker; please send me a free subscription
- _____ at no charge because of low income

This is a (check one):

- _____ renewal
- _____ new subscription

_____ Please send me a list of available back issues

Please make all checks payable to MCC. All subscriptions should be sent to the Akron address; Canadian subscribers may pay in Canadian currency.

Return to:
MCC Women's Concerns
Box 500
Akron, PA 17501-0500
717-859-3889

Illustrations in this issue were drawn by Teresa Pankratz of Chicago. Please do not reproduce without permission.

1874–1912, missionary to India; and Hettie Kulp Mininger, 1874–1965, urban missionary.

- Jan Kraus of Toronto, Ont., has been appointed executive director of **Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education**.
- Connie Faber of Hillsboro, Kan., is new **assistant editor** of *The Christian Leader*. She is a graduate of Tabor College and a deacon in the Ebenfield Mennonite Brethren Church.

- “**No more excuses: Stop Sexual Abuse**” was an October 28–29 conference at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Clearbrook, B.C. The event was sponsored by Columbia Bible College, Conference of Mennonites in B.C., BC Conference of Mennonite Brethren Church, Emmanuel Mennonite Church and MCC B.C. Women’s Concerns.

WOMEN’S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committees on Women’s Concerns. We believe that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committees strive to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures through which women and men can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committees on Women’s Concerns.

WOMEN’S CONCERNS REPORT is edited by Kristina Mast Burnett. Layout by Beth Oberholtzer.

Subscription cost is \$12 U.S./\$15 Cdn. for one year or \$20 U.S./\$25 Cdn. for two years. Send all subscriptions, correspondence and address changes to Editor, MCC Women’s Concerns, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500; telephone 717-859-3889; fax 717-859-3875. Canadian subscribers may pay in Canadian currency.

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

2nd Class

POSTAGE PAID

at Akron, PA

21 South 12th Street
PO Box 500
Akron, PA
17501-0500